

MIDWINTER OBSERVATIONS FROM DJIBOUTI

J.S. Ash

Djibouti, a small country of some 23 000 km², is sandwiched between Somalia and Ethiopia opposite South Yemen and thus at the narrowest sea-crossing between Asia and Africa south of Egypt. It might therefore be expected to have many birds. However, ornithologically it has been extremely poorly known, and it is only in the last few years that some preliminary field observations have been made. Much existing knowledge has been brought together recently by Welch & Welch (1984), referred to as W&W in the text below, but they do not include the few species that they have not seen themselves. The following observations result from a brief visit to the country on 25 - 27 December 1975. The first two days were spent along the coast for up to 6 km east of Djibouti town, and on 27th about 2 hours were spent near the airport.

In the notes which follow there are no published records prior to my observations for those species indicated by an asterisk; and those with two asterisks are additions to the list given in W&W. The $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$ degree square numbers for each species mentioned have also been included so that they can be traced in the future for mapping distribution, as in Somalia and Ethiopia (Fig. 1 in Ash & Pomeroy 1981). Appended also, together with square numbers, is a complete list of other species of birds reported from Djibouti taken from W&W and the other literature sources listed. Following my own observations I have included in parentheses brief references to previous records. The order and nomenclature follow that of Ash & Miskell (1983).

In midwinter, at least, the area of coastline adjoining Djibouti town is apparently of some importance to waders and a variety of sea-birds. A quick inspection on my first arrival indicated that there were about 8000 waders present of about 18 species, so that the brief period of my visit might be usefully employed in obtaining more information about them. In the event, about 5600 waders were counted, but there were some local feeding movements taking place, and as very suitable habitat extends eastwards for a considerable distance into Somalia the total numbers involved may be very large.

- Ardea cinerea* Grey Heron: 2 on 26th. (The commonest heron (Simoneau 1974); a few in 4 localities by W&W.)
Ardea goliath Goliath Heron: 2 on 26th. (A few recorded by Navez (in litt.), Simoneau 1974, and W&W.)
Egretta gularis African Reef Heron: at least 75; in one group of 53, 28 were dark and 25 white; there were no intermediates as would occur further south in Somalia. (The white phase said to be very rare (Simoneau 1974); also recorded by Navez 1981, Oustalet 1894, Thesiger & Meynell 1935, and W&W.)
Platalea leucorodia Eurasian Spoonbill: 16 on 26th, presumably of the

- race *archeri*. (Up to 43 by W&W, also recorded by Navez *in litt.*, and Simoneau 1974.)
- Neophron percnopterus* Egyptian Vulture: 2 at Airport on 27th. (The commonest raptor (Simoneau 1974), extremely abundant (W&W), Navez (*in litt.*)).)
- Aquila rapax* Tawny Eagle: 2 on 26th. (Recorded by Simoneau 1974, but only one by W&W; also recorded by Oustalet 1894.)
- Milvus migrans* Black Kite: 1 - 2 on 2 days only. (Recorded as fairly common by W&W, but curiously not at all by Simoneau 1974.)
- **Pandion haliaetus* Osprey: 5 on 25th. (Fairly common according to W&W, but not mentioned by Simoneau 1974.)
- **Falco biarmicus* Lanner Falcon: 1 on 25th. (4 seen by W&W.)
- Haematopus ostralegus* Oystercatcher: 40+ on 25th and 26th. (Several seen by W&W, recorded by Simoneau 1974 and Navez *in litt.*)
- Charadrius alexandrinus* Kentish Plover: 200 on 25th, 250 on 26th, apparently including both northern migrants and local birds. (Up to 20 by W&W, also by Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Charadrius hiaticula* Ringed Plover: 100 on 25th and 26th. (Only a few by W&W; also noted by Navez *in litt.* and Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Charadrius leschenaultii* Great Sandplover: 300 on 26th. (Very few seen by W&W; Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Charadrius mongolus* Mongolian Sandplover: 50 on 25th and 26th. (Very few recorded by W&W; Heuglin 1859.)
- ***Pluvialis dominica* Lesser Golden Plover: 21 on 26th. The only record from Djibouti (Ash 1980).
- **Pluvialis squatarola* Grey Plover: 200 on 25th and 26th. (A few reports by W&W; Navez *in litt.*)
- Actitis hypoleucos* Common Sandpiper: 2 on 25th, 5 on 26th. (Small numbers by W&W; Navez *in litt.*, Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Numenius arquata* Curlew: 25 on 25th and 26th. (Fewer by W&W; Navez *in litt.*, Simoneau 1974, Archer & Godman 1937.)
- Numenius phaeopus* Whimbrel: 10 on 25th and 26th. (Similar numbers seen by W&W; Archer & Godman 1937, Navez *in litt.*)
- Tringa nebularia* Greenshank: 3 on 25th, 5 on 26th. (Common - Simoneau 1974; Archer & Godman 1937, Friedmann 1930, Navez *in litt.*, Thesiger & Meynell 1935, W&W.)
- Tringa totanus* Redshank: 75, including a flock of 42, on 25th and 26th. (Numerous in W&W; Archer & Godman 1937, Navez *in litt.*)
- Calidris alba* Sanderling: 1000 on 25th and 26th. (Few by W&W; Archer & Godman 1937.)
- Calidris ferruginea* Curlew Sandpiper: 2000 on 25th and 26th. (Fairly common by W&W; Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Calidris minuta* Little Stint: 250+ on 25th and 26th. (A few by W&W; Friedmann 1930, Thesiger & Meynell 1935, Navez *in litt.*)
- **Limicola falcinellus* Broad-billed Sandpiper: 3 on 25th. (One on 25 March 1983 by W&W.) For other records in the area see Ash (1978).
- Limosa lapponica* Bar-tailed Godwit: 500+ on 25th, 1000+ on 26th. (Very few by W&W; Heuglin 1859, Navez *in litt.*)
- **Arenaria interpres* Turnstone: 500 on 25th and 26th. (Common by W&W; Navez *in litt.*)

- **Larus argentatus* Herring Gull: Fairly common. (Recorded by W&W.)
- **Larus fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gull: Very common. (Navez *in litt.*, W&W.)
- Larus hemprichii* Sooty Gull: Very common. (Very common by W&W; Navez 1981, Simoneau 1974.)
- **Larus leucophthalmus* White-eyed Gull: One on 26th. (Up to 50 by W&W; Navez 1981.)
- **Larus ridibundus* Black-headed Gull: 15 on 25th and 26th. (Up to 16 by W&W.)
- **Gelochelidon nilotica* Gull-billed Tern: 10 on 25th, 50 on 26th. (Up to 10 by W&W; Navez *in litt.*)
- **Sterna bengalensis* Lesser Crested Tern: 500 on 25th and 26th. (Relatively few by W&W; Navez 1981.)
- **Sterna albifrons* Little Tern: 25 on 25th and 26th. (Very few by W&W; Navez 1981.)
- **Sterna bergii* Crested Tern: 3 on 25th. (Rather more seen by W&W.)
- **Sterna caspia* Caspian Tern: 15 on 25th and 26th. (Two by W&W; Navez *in litt.*, Simoneau 1974.)
- ***Sterna repressa* White-cheeked Tern: 3 on 25th. The only record for Djibouti.
- ***Sterna sandvicensis* Sandwich Tern: 1 on 25th. The only record from Djibouti. This species is evidently commoner in the Gulf of Aden than the existing few records suggest, for I saw over 100 on the Hadhramaut coast on 27 November 1984.
- Psittacula krameri* Rose-ringed Parakeet: 15 on 26th. (Two by W&W; Navez 1981, Simoneau 1974.)
- **Corvus splendens* Indian House Crow: 25+ daily in the town and on the beach. (Extremely numerous in Djibouti and 18 at Obock; has obviously increased greatly (W&W); they were first seen in Djibouti by Clarke (1967) in 1958, then again by Dr A.S. Cheke (*in litt.*). The major increase in Djibouti is similar to that elsewhere in the Afro-Arabian area (Ash 1984).
- Pycnonotus barbatus* Common Bulbul: Fairly common in urban areas. (Fairly common by W&W; Navez *in litt.*, Oustalet 1894, Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- **Oenanthe isabellina* Isabelline Wheatear: 2 on 25th. (One by W&W.)
- Hippolais pallida* Olivaceous Warbler: 2 at the Airport on 27th. (A few by W&W; Heuglin 1859.)
- **Prinia gracilis* Striped-backed Prinia: Common in urban areas and along the head of the beach. (Common by W&W; Navez *in litt.*, Ash 1982.)
- **Motacilla alba* White Wagtail: 10 on 25th. (A few by W&W.)
- **Motacilla flava* Yellow Wagtail: 1 on 25th. (Common by W&W.)
- Nectarinia habessinica* Shining Sunbird: 2 on 27th. (A few by W&W; Oustalet 1894, Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- Ploceus galbula* Rüppell's Weaver: A female on 25th, 10+, including adult males, at the Airport on 27th. (Very common by W&W; Archer & Godman 1961; Friedmann 1937; Oustalet 1894; Thesiger & Meynell 1935.)
- **Passer euchlorus* Arabian Golden Sparrow: 15 at the Airport on 27th,

some singing and sitting in *Stereospermum*-like trees; they were identical with birds in Yemen and further east in Somalia. *Passer luteus* (the Golden Sparrow) is spreading south and is now very close to the Djibouti border, and it is conceivable that the two species may meet at some time (Ash et al. 1980). (Quite common by W&W.)

ADDITIONAL SPECIES

The following list is of all the other species, as well as those discussed above, recorded from Djibouti. The great majority are from Welch & Welch (1984).

The record locality square numbers are given for each species and include my own, other literature sources, and the many provided by G.R. and H.J. Welch (*in litt.*).

Pelecanus rufescens Pink-backed Pelican 4b, 5a. *Sula leucogaster* Brown Booby 2c. *Bubulcus ibis* Cattle Egret 5a. *Butorides striatus* Green-backed Heron 5a. *Egretta garzetta* Little Egret 5a. *Ciconia abdimii* Abdim's Stork 4b, 5a. *Threskiornis aethiopica* Sacred Ibis 5a. *Phoenicopterus ruber* Greater Flamingo 5a. *Neophron rueppellii* Rüppell's Vulture 4b. *Circus aeruginosus* Marsh Harrier 4b, 5a. *C. macrourus* Pallid Harrier 2c, 4bd, 5a. *C. pygargus* Montagu's Harrier 4b. *Circus aegyptus* Short-toed Eagle 4b. *Accipiter badius* Shikra 4b. **A. nisus* Eurasian Sparrowhawk 4b. **Aquila heliaca* Imperial Eagle 4b. **A. nipalensis* Steppe Eagle 4b, 5a. *A. verreauxi* Verreaux's Eagle 4b. *Buteo buteo* Common Buzzard 4b. *B. rufinus* Long-legged Buzzard 4b. *Hieraaetus pennatus* Booted Eagle 2c, 4b, 5a. *H. spilogaster* African Hawk Eagle 4b. *Falco concolor* Sooty Falcon 2c. *F. naumanni* Lesser Kestrel 4b. *F. tinnunculus* Kestrel 4b.

Francolinus ochropectus Djibouti Francolin 4b. *Otis arabs* Arabian Bustard 4d. *Charadrius dubius* Little Ringed Plover 5a. *Pluvialis dominica* Lesser Golden Plover 5a. *Tringa glareola* Wood Sandpiper 5a. *T. ochropus* Green Sandpiper 4b, 5a. *Xenus cinereus* Terek Sandpiper 5a. *Calidris alpina* Dunlin 5a. *Dromas ardeola* Crab Plover 2c, 5a. *Burhinus capensis* Spotted Thicknee 4c. *Stercorarius pomarinus* Pomarine Skua 5a. *Chlidonias leucopterus* Whiskered Tern 5a. *Sterna fuscata* Sooty Tern 5a breeding. *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse 5a. *P. senegallus* Spotted Sandgrouse 2c. *Columba arquatrix* Olive Pigeon 4b. *C. guinea* Speckled Pigeon 4bd, 5a. *Oena capensis* Namaqua Dove 2c, 5a. *Streptopelia roseogrisea* Pink-headed Dove 4b, 5a. *S. senegalensis* Laughing Dove 4b, 5a. *Treron waalia* Bruce's Green Pigeon 4b. *Otus scops* Scops Owl 4b. *Caprimulgus inornatus* Plain Nightjar 4c. *C. nubicus* Nubian Nightjar 4d, 5a (*tamaricis*).

Apus affinis Little Swift 5a. **A. pallidus* Pallid Swift 4b. *Cypsiurus parvus* Palm Swift 5a. *Merops albicollis* White-throated Bee-eater 4bc. *M. apiaster* Eurasian Bee-eater 2c, 4bd, 5a. *M. persicus* or *supercilius* Blue-cheeked or Madagascar Bee-eater 4b, 5a (breeding). *Upupa epops* Hoopoe 4b, 5a. *Tockus flavirostris* Yellow-billed Hornbill 4b. *T. hemprichii* Hemprich's Hornbill 4b. *Lybius melanocephalus* Black-throated Barbet 4bc. *Trachyphonus margaritatus* Yellow-breasted Barbet

4bcd, 5a. *Campethera nubica* Nubian Woodpecker 4b. *Dendropicos fuscescens* 4bc.

Alaemon alaudipes Hoopoe Lark 2c, 4bd, 5a. *Ammomanes deserti* Desert Lark 2c, 4abcd. *Eremopterix nigriceps* White-fronted Sparrow Lark 2c, 4bcd, 5a. *Galerida cristata* Crested Lark 4bd, 5a. *Hirundo fuligula* African Rock Martin 4bd, 5a. *H. rustica* Eurasian Swallow 2c, 4bd, 5a. *Dicrurus adsimilis* Drongo 4b. *Oriolus oriolus* Golden Oriole 4c. *Corvus rhipidurus* Fan-tailed Raven 4b, 5a. *C. ruficollis* Brown-necked Raven 5a. *Cercomela melanura* Black-tailed Rock Chat 4bc, 5a. *Cercotrichas galactotes* Rufous Bush Chat 4bcd, 5a. *C. podobe* Black Bush Robin 4b. *Irania gutturalis* Irania 5a. *Monticola saxatilis* Rock Thrush 4b. *M. solitaria* Blue Rock Thrush 4b. **Oenanthe bottae* Red-breasted Wheatear 4b. *O. hispanica* Black-eared Wheatear 4b. *O. leucopyga* White-rumped Wheatear 4c. **O. monacha* Hooded Wheatear 5a. *O. pleschanka* Pied Wheatear 4b, 5a. *Phoenicurus ochruros* Black Redstart 4b. *P. phoenicurus* Redstart 4bd, 5a. *Saxicola torquata* Stonechat 4b. *Turdus philomelos* Song Thrush 4b.

Acrocephalus arundinaceus zarudnyi Great Reed Warbler 4c. *Camaroptera brachyura* Grey-backed Camaroptera 4b. *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Wood Warbler 4b. *P. trochilus* Willow Warbler 4bcd, 5a. *P. umbrovirens* Brown Woodland Warbler 4b. *Spiloptila rufifrons* Red-fronted Warbler 4bcd. *Sylvia atricapilla* Blackcap 5a. *S. borin* Garden Warbler 4c. *S. communis* Whitethroat 4c, 5a. *S. nisoria* Barred Warbler 4c, 5a. **S. ruepelli* Rüppell's Warbler 4b. *Sylvietta brachyura* Northern Crombec 4bd. *Muscicapa striata* Spotted Flycatcher 4c. *Batis orientalis* Grey-headed Batis 4bc. *Terpsiphone viridis* Paradise Flycatcher 4b.

Anthus campestris Tawny Pipit 2c, 5a. *A. cervinus* Red-throated Pipit 4b, 5a. *A. novaeseelandiae* Richard's Pipit 4b. *A. similis* Long-billed Pipit 4b. *A. trivialis* Tree Pipit 4c, 5a. *Motacilla cinerea* Grey Wagtail 4b. *Laniarius ferrugineus* Tropical Boubou 4b. *Rhodophoneus cruentus* 2c, 4bc, 5a. *Tchagra senegala* Black-headed Tchagra 4b. *Lanius excubitor* Grey Shrike 4bc, 5a. *L. isabellinus* Red-tailed Shrike 4b, 5a. *L. somalicus* Somali Fiscal 4b. *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Violet-backed Starling 4bc. *Onychognathus blythii* Somali Chestnut-winged Starling 4b. *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Red-billed Oxpecker 4b. *Anthreptes platurus* Pygmy Sunbird 4bc, 5a. *Nectarinia habessinica* Shining Sunbird 4b, 5a. *Zosterops abyssinica* Abyssinian White-eye 4b.

Ploceus galbula Rüppell's Weaver 4b, 5a. *Passer griseus* Grey-headed Sparrow 4d, 5a. *Lagonosticta senegala* Red-billed Firefinch 4b, 5a. *Lonchura malabarica* Silverbill 4b, 5a. *Emberiza striolata* House Bunting 4b. *E. tahapisi* Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting 4b, 5a. *Serinus atrogularis* Yellow-rumped Seed-eater 4b

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J.S. Ash, Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, Smit Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560, U.S.A.

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ADDENDUM

Page 47 above: the English name Rosy-patched Shrike was omitted from *Rhodophoneus cruentus*.



ADDENDA

The following two species accounts were omitted from Mr N.R. Fuggles-Couchman's paper 'The distribution of, and other notes on, some birds of Tanzania - Part II (continued)' printed in *Scopus* 8: 81-92. We offer our apologies to the author and readers for this mistake.

Apalis thoracica Bar-throated Apalis

The range of this species as given by Britton (1980) for the race *griseiceps* should be extended southwards from the Nou Forest, Mbulu, to include Mt Hanang where, in February 1946, it was numerous in the forests above Nangwa, up to 2300 m. A male (46/21) was collected there on 5 February. This apalis was also recorded from a dry type of gallery forest on the northern slopes of the mountain in the same month.

In January 1961 this species was found in the forest above Bismarck Hut on Mt Kilimanjaro, and is notable for the altitude of that locality, 3200 m, which is 500 m higher than the altitudinal limit given by Britton (1980).

Camaroptera brachyura Grey-backed Camaroptera

Britton (1980) gives the range of the race *fugglescouchmani* as from the Ulugurus to Mahenge. This should be extended northwards to include the Nguru Mts. Moreau (1939) described this new race and gave its distribution as "Uluguru and Nguru Mts in evergreen forest". The inclusion of the Nguru Mts was based on a male (38/17) collected for him in evergreen forest near Mhonda Mission at 650 m, in August 1938, to which there is reference in the original description.